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PA/HO Department of State  
E.O. 12958, as amended  
April 21, 2005

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

May 15, 1969

Copies To:

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S/S-S:CMSMEMORANDUM FOR MR. HENRY A. KISSINGER  
THE WHITE HOUSE

SUBJECT: Reply to Bishop Swanstrom's Cable

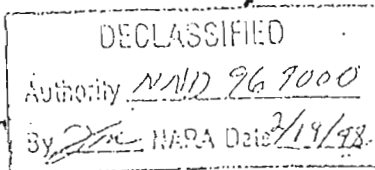
Bishop Swanstrom has requested that the U.S. Government sell to Joint Church Aid (USA) two additional C-97's in order to increase the total number of C-97's available to JCA for airlifting relief supplies into the Biafran enclave. Originally, we sold to JCA at a nominal price four C-97's despite the active opposition of the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Federal Government is presently aware of JCA's request for two additional planes and has made its firm opposition to the sale known to the Department. The Nigerian Government explicitly linked present negotiations concerning a surface corridor with any sale of the additional aircraft to JCA. Negotiations on a surface corridor are now in an active phase and we have assurances that the Nigerian Government is prepared to approve a surface corridor plan.

Bishop Swanstrom is aware of our problem of releasing C-97's at this time. Extensive conversations have been held with his principal officer in charge of the airlift, Mr. Edward Kinney, and James MacCracken, Director of Church World Services, which is a principal partner of Catholic Relief Services in the JCA operation. We have been exploring with them ways to maximize the use of their present complement of aircraft without actually increasing

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the size of the complement. At the same time, we are examining ways of improving their financial position. They, on their part, are exploring the possibility of procuring commercial aircraft, particularly aircraft of foreign registry.

Since Bishop Swanstrom's request for two additional aircraft was received, one JCA C-97 crashed while landing at Uli Airport. The crew was not injured, but the aircraft as a result of the crash was a total loss. We have anticipated a request for a replacement for this aircraft and have decided that we will make available a replacement for the lost C-97, as stated in the attached letter to Bishop Swanstrom.

For your background information, prior to the introduction of the four C-97's in January of this year, the total Sao Tome air fleet included six DC-6's, two DC-7's, one C-46, and one Constellation all flying an average of 70 tons nightly into Uli airfield. With the introduction of the four C-97's, two DC-6's and two DC-7's were dropped. Severe C-97 supply and maintenance problems resulted, however, in an initial net decrease in tons flown; but with refinements in the support system and extensive help from the U.S. Air Force in finding parts, these planes have now become a major ingredient of the airbridge. Airlift capacity has recently been averaging 160 tons per night.

Because of the close relations which already exist between Bishop Swanstrom and Dr. Ferguson,

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By Jm NARA Date 2/19/98

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and the possibility that Dr. Ferguson should brief Bishop Swanstrom more fully on the negotiations surrounding a surface relief corridor, it is felt that a reply to the Bishop's cable should be made by Dr. Ferguson. Moreover, Dr. Ferguson has already replied to an earlier cable from the Bishop concerning the same subject.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you approve the attached reply to Bishop Swanstrom for signature by Dr. Ferguson.

  
John P. Walsh

Acting Executive Secretary

Attachments:

1. Incoming correspondence
2. Suggested reply

Clearances:

AFW - Mr. Melbourne

AID/AFR/CWA - Mr. North

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